

New signs help drivers find best route from Provo to Lehi

Genelle Pugmire - Daily Herald | Posted: Thursday, November 4, 2010 12:30 am |

UDOT has put up eight electronic signs showing the time it takes to get to Lehi and other places in order to relieve some congestion on the interstate because of the CORE work. Photo taken on Wednesday, November 3, 2010 on University Parkway in Orem
ASHLEY FRANSCELL/Daily Herald

A new technology out of Berkeley, California, is helping drivers get between Provo and Lehi in the fastest time available, whether it's on Interstate 15 or on State Street. Crews on UDOT's Utah County I-15 Corridor Expansion recently unveiled new travel time comparison signs, or Trailblazers, which are the first in Utah to display both freeway and local road travel times.

According to Rob Clayton I-15 Core traffic leader, "This is one of the first installations of its kind in the country."

"They will also be left in place to manage events and accidents on the freeway, after the Core project is done," Clayton added.

The signs display data collected through traffic monitoring equipment such as sensor "pucks" installed at traffic signals from Center Street in Provo to Lehi Main Street. Those pucks, set in the asphalt, read the magnetic signatures of individual cars, and can tell from puck to puck how fast the car is going, according to Clayton.

"Each car creates a new signature as it goes by the puck," Clayton explained. "It is collecting data all along the route and updates every 20 seconds. The puck communicates with a radio in the equipment on the side of the road."

Pucks are about four inches in width and are set in five-inch holes in the asphalt. UDOT's Traffic Operations Center collects and analyzes the data, then updates and displays current travel time information every six minutes. "The new signs allow drivers to make more informed decisions and take the route of least congestion, improving traffic flow throughout the corridor," said Eric Rasband, I-15 CORE traffic signal manager. "The Trailblazers are another tool we are using to minimize inconvenience to the traveling public during the next two years of construction."

The company that manufactures the detection pucks and developed the algorithm to calculate the travel times is Sensys Networks in Berkeley. Provided by Provo River Constructors at no additional cost to their bid for I-15 CORE construction, the signs will remain in place after construction is complete. UDOT expects the Trailblazers to be useful long-term, especially during large-scale community events and BYU athletic contests.

Clayton said that because this is a new invention, more or less, UDOT is taking a period of time to practice with it. "We would like feedback from the community on the Trailblazers," Clayton asked. "We would like to know how it is doing for them."

In addition to following the Trailblazer signs to reduce delays, UDOT encourages motorists to carpool, telecommute, use alternate routes and shift travel times to avoid commuting hours. Construction information is subject to change, especially during winter months. The most current information is available through weekly e-mail updates at udot.utah.gov/i15core, following the project on facebook.com/i15core and twitter.com/i15core and receiving text updates by texting "i15" to 53535.

The current sign installations in Orem are:

- Northbound State Street, just south of 1600 North, just south of 800 North and just south of University Parkway
- Westbound 1600 North, just east of State Street
- Westbound 800 North, just east of State Street
- Westbound University Parkway, just east of State Street

Future installations will be:

- Northbound State Street, just south of Orem Center Street and just south of Provo Center Street
- Westbound Orem Center Street, just east of State Street

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